



# Charting Your Course to Home Ownership

## Improve Your Home to Improve Your Health

A home remodeling project – and your investment in it – can do so much more than update. It can make your home a healthier place to live and breathe for you and your family.

Most Americans spend 80%-90% of their time indoors, and indoor air is typically much more polluted than outdoor air. That's why the home environment is related to so many health effects, ranging from allergies and asthma triggered by dust mites, mold and pest residue to cancer or death from combustion pollutants or dangerous fumes.

The good news is that you CAN make your house a healthy home for your family by applying the seven principles of healthy homes, especially when you plan a remodeling project. Include home improvements that will:

### 1. Keep It Dry

Improve drainage and make sure structural work is detailed with effective flashings and weather barriers to drain the rain that seeps under siding and roofing and into window frames. Consider ways to manage moisture movement and humidity, prevent hidden condensation on cold surfaces and provide protection from plumbing leaks. Keeping your home dry prevents mold growth; keeping humidity low controls dust mites. Consider installing an EnergyStar-rated dehumidifier to keep the indoor relative humidity below 50%.



*Dust mites can cause asthma. Best control is low humidity (below 50% RH).*

### 2. Keep It Clean

Choose easy-to-clean surfaces such as smooth floorings and washable rugs. Eliminate hard-to-reach nooks and dust collectors. Add shoe cubbies and big commercial-style door mats at the family entry. Use a low-emission vacuum cleaner.

### 3. Keep It Well-Ventilated

Every home needs some fresh air to dilute pollutants generated in daily living. At a minimum, make sure you have effective exhaust fans in bathrooms and a kitchen hood exhaust to the outdoors. Choose quiet fans, and make sure the ducts are installed properly according to manufacturer instructions – or you won't get the airflow you paid for. For optimal air quality, seal your home airtight and install a filtered, fresh-air ventilation system that allows you to control the quantity and quality of ventilation.

#### 4. Keep It Safe

Go on a home hazard hunt like a detective. Correct slippery floors, install sturdy handrails, add decorative grab bars and increase lighting to reduce slip and fall hazards. Add ground fault circuit interrupters in wet areas. Mount fire extinguishers, smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors. Childproof with storage locks, rounded corners, second-story window and stair gates and cordless blinds. Install high-security deadbolts, peep holes, exterior motion lights and safety glass.

#### 5. Keep It Free of Contaminants

If your home was built before 1978, assume it may have lead-based paint and make sure workers use lead-safe work practices that don't create or leave lead dust. Consider storm-, flood- and mold-resistant materials and structural assemblies. Provide ample venting of ALL combustion appliances; better still are "direct vent" furnaces, fireplaces and water heaters that don't use your indoor air to feed the flame. Seal the doors and walls between your garage and living space.

#### 6. Keep It Pest Free

Learn about "integrated pest management" to control pests with as little toxic chemical as possible. Seal all holes and gaps, give pests no place to nest and hide, reduce the availability of food and water and use low toxic pesticides like borate treatments and traps.

#### 7. Keep It Well-Maintained

Choose durable, low-maintenance materials that will hold up well in our warm, humid climate. Ensure that foundations are designed for soil conditions. Consider high-wind roofing, tear-resistant roof underlayments and window protections.

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This material is based on work supported by the Restoring Home Ownership in Louisiana Hurricane Recovery project funded in part by USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, Smith-Lever Special Needs project number 2007-41210-03986.

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Pub. 3088-I 09/08

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. The Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.